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FLOOR DEBATE

March 21, 2001      LB 827

amendments to the committee amendments were offered. Senator Robak, you have the first amendment this morning, Senator. Senator Robak, AM0912, as an amendment to the committee amendments. (AM0912, Legislative Journal page 970.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Robak, I will recognize you to fill us in where we are on your amendment to LB 827. Your amendment is AM0912. You may...

SENATOR ROBAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hate to do this to the body, but I will have to start all over from the beginning. Is that okay?

SENATOR CUDABACK: That's fine.

SENATOR ROBAK: Thank you. And I'll just repeat myself a little bit. We've heard a lot about overbuilding, and NPPD overbuilt. That was mentioned several times and I think that's nonsense because it was a prudent business decision to build reserve capacity. Had it not...had they not done this, it would have been false economy. It would have been imprudent not to build the reserve capacity while they were at it. The rural districts stand to lose most if this bill passes because it's the remote and rural areas that are the very areas where the private sector is least likely to make telecommunications investment, just (inaudible) is...just as the private sector did not want to make private investors for the public service. And that's why we have public power in our state today. We're the only state in the nation that does have public power. And NPPD does have 900 miles of fiber optics. Other political subdivisions have some as well. Those assets could very well could be used to help serve the very areas that the private sectors won't serve. LB 827 is contrary to the 1996 Federal Telecommunications Act. That was the act that was designed to foster competition in the telephone industry. Public...public power districts, working in partnership, could foster more competition and, therefore, greater benefits for consumers. FCC would urge the state not to erect barriers to public entities from entering telecommunications because there are opportunities for public partnerships which would work. In...private companies have, as I said, in other states have found a way for public and private